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# Affirmation

An Independent Voice for:  
United Methodists for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns  
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## General Conference 2016... It's Coming!

Can you believe it? General Conference is just a little over 6 months away! The leadership of the Love Your Neighbor Coalition (LYNC) is preparing legislative submission and analysis, wrangling volunteers, securing housing, and preparing to witness so that the message of peace, justice and full inclusion is heard loud and clear!

Affirmation helped the coalition by putting the security payment on coalition housing thanks to the bequest from Tim Tennant-Jayne. There are several ways you can help, too. Support the Coalition's work at General Conference by signing on to our Vision for The United Methodist Church – and once you've done that don't forget to make a donation! \$25 or more to help all of us create opportunities for volunteers and train legislative teams! <http://bit.ly/LYN Cvision>

You can read the statement on Page 3.

## Love in a Time of Persecution By Ann Craig

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"Hang Them!" was the headline in a local Ugandan paper that, combined with the passage of the Anti-Homosexuality Bill in Uganda, forced Ugandan LGBTQ people into hiding if they could not get out of the country. The law threatened family, friends, and neighbors with imprisonment if they didn't turn in people for being gay. Neighbors and landlords forced LGBTQ Ugandans to flee their homes. They lost jobs, communities, and families.

In August, Affirmation began a partnership with Ugandan LGBTQ people to help a growing network of men and women establish two small businesses to help them survive. With a small grant, made possible by the bequest of Tim Tenant-Jayne, we enabled them to launch a hair salon and a brick making business.

I, as Affirmation Co-Spokesperson, and Joseph Tolton who formed The Fellowship Global in 2011, first connected with Ugandan LGBTQ faith before the 2012 General Conference as the Love Your Neighbor Coalition reached out to United Methodists in East and West Africa. In the process, they met Denis Iraguha, chaplain for LGBTQ people with Bishop Christopher Senyonjo, who visited community members in their home when they were dealing with HIV/AIDS, family, and support.

**When the Anti-Homosexuality Bill calling for the death sentence for gays passed,** Denis and four other men were forced out of their homes and fled to the boarder of Rwanda. In a few months, the bill was declared unconstitutional, and things quieted down somewhat. Denis and his team made their way back to Kampala, the capital of Uganda, but with nothing to their names.

**Today, they have a chance.** Through the support of Affirmation, they may be able to gain a foothold and restore their sense of dignity. There are no guarantees. Although they

(Love...Continued on page 7)



## Financing Affirmation at GC 2016

By Jan Hensley-Olson

It's hard to believe that another General Conference is just around the corner. May 2016 will be here soon. Affirmation will be in Portland to make its presence known, just like it has for every General Conference since 1976. We will continue to show the UMC that we are still here even though the church has done a lot to push us away. There will be a core group of Affirmation individuals, along with the Love Your Neighbor coalition, who will represent **you** at General Conference 2016.

The Affirmation council has been making plans. Individuals are making reservations. We are determining what we can do and how we will pay for it. That's where you come in! There are a number of ways you can contribute to our work. The first, of course, is an outright donation. We recently received a \$4000 check from a long-time supporter. Are you able to match it? If not, how about:

\$1975	In honor of the year Affirmation was founded
\$500 or 500	For our "Sweets for the Sweets" reception
\$100 or \$10	For each of the 10 General Conferences Affirmation has attended
\$40 or \$1 Per	Affirmation has supported LGBTQ persons
\$1	For every year you've been out as a LGBTQ person or an ally

Any amount will help but we hope you can and will be very generous.

Another way to support us is participation in an on-line auction we are planning. Do you have something we could auction? Some of the items already committed are: a one week stay in a rural Tennessee retreat, a Barry Manilow memorabilia collection, 3 hours with a professional organizer, a week stay in upstate New York, a kitchen layout design, an LGBT theological book collection, and clergy services for a wedding including the marriage license. It's also important to participate by bidding during the auction. Look for information about the on-line auction in the coming months.

Have you named Affirmation in your will? It is another way you can support our work. Our new project in Uganda (see article in this issue) has been possible because an Affirmation member remembered us in his estate planning. Can we count on you to do the same?

How about joining us in Portland? We are always in need of volunteers. Your presence would be a great gift to us. If you are unable to make the trip to Portland we ask for your prayers. GC can be very physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually draining. We welcome

(Financing...Continued on page 4)

### Affirmation Newsletter

Only Affirmation's elected spokespersons may represent the official positions of this organization. Opinions here, signed or unsigned, are those of the writers, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Affirmation.

Articles for consideration for publication may be submitted to:  
[AffirmationNewsletter at yahoo.com](mailto:AffirmationNewsletter@yahoo.com)\*

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### Mission Statement

As an independent voice of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer people, Affirmation radically reclaims the compassionate and transforming gospel of Jesus Christ by relentlessly pursuing full inclusion in the Church as we journey with the Spirit in creating God's beloved community.

Adopted January 2005

\* Note: substitute the symbol "@" for the letters "\_at\_" in the email addresses.





## A Vision for The United Methodist Church (From the Love Your Neighbor Coalition)

WE ARE United Methodists committed to the embodiment of God's love and justice within and through the people and mission of The United Methodist Church. The core of our faith is found in Jesus' response to the question "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" – we are to "love God with all our heart, soul (being) and mind" and to "love neighbor as self" (Matthew 22:36-40). These hold ancient law, the prophets and the Gospel message together with our contemporary Book of Discipline and Book of Resolutions. To this end, OUR MISSION is to assure The United Methodist Church is fully open to the presence, love and grace of God offered to all the world.

Just as we are all interconnected and interdependent in the complexity of our relationships with God, humanity and all of creation, we recognize, acknowledge, and celebrate the ways all of the following concerns and hopes for our church are connected, interdependent and intersectional:

WE BELIEVE in a church that practices the Wesleyan way of holiness.

Therefore WE CALL OUR CHURCH to remember John Wesley's call to personal and social holiness and to embrace connectionalism in ways that lead to transformation of the Church and world.

WE BELIEVE in a church that is inclusive and open to all people; and the Holy Spirit demands the full inclusion of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer people in the life and ministry of The United Methodist Church.

Therefore WE CALL OUR CHURCH to remove all discriminatory language in the Book of Discipline that is doing harm to faithful lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer persons.

WE BELIEVE in a church that passionately works for racial justice.

Therefore WE CALL OUR CHURCH to work for racial justice and resist exploitive systems that teach racial, ethnic, and / or tribal superiority and inferiority.

WE BELIEVE in a church that yearns to be global and connectional in nature.

Therefore WE CALL OUR CHURCH to repent from our history of colonialism and racism, and adopt a denominational structure reflecting this repentance, while celebrating the giftedness that indigenous peoples share in the life of church and society, when welcomed as equal partners.

WE BELIEVE in a church that pursues peacemaking over war and stewardship over ecological degradation.

Therefore WE CALL OUR CHURCH to divest from activities that support war, occupation, and the destruction of God's creation.

WE BELIEVE in a church that opens its buildings and systems to people with disabilities, welcomes those with physical, mental, and psychological challenges, and works to incorporate every person as they are, with their gifts and challenges.

Therefore WE CALL OUR CHURCH to develop and implement a plan for accessibility at all levels of the Church, including a unified approach from the Boards of Ordained Ministry when it comes to questioning candidates with disabilities, along with a comprehensive plan to ensure equal access and fairness when dealing with a long-term disability, or emerging physical or mental challenge.

WE BELIEVE in a church that embraces the fullness of life and dignity in death.

Therefore WE CALL OUR CHURCH to support policies leading to comprehensive, age-appropriate, medically-accurate and culturally-competent sexuality and parenting education; universal access to contraception and compassionate abortion care; healthy and safe environments for children; expanded access to adoption and alternative methods of pregnancy; and systems of justice that support protections for care of the elderly and that abolish the taking of life as a punitive measure for crimes.

WE BELIEVE in a church that ensures the peaceful pursuit of self-determination and religious expression.

*(A Vision...Continued on page 5)*



## The LGBTQ Scene in Portland, Oregon

By Stephen Mallett

This article would not have been possible without much help from Gaytravel.com. We'd have loved to have taken a field trip and found all of this out first hand, but time and budget didn't permit it.

Portland is ranked as one of America's top five most livable cities and the most eco-friendly city. Portland is a green, clean, open-minded city that still has a small-town vibe. Portland is host to Pride Northwest and the Lesbian and Gay Film Fest.

Though Portland is not as visibly gay a city as San Francisco, it has one of America's strongest feminist and lesbian communities. The Hawthorne District in the southeast quadrant is the most concentrated lesbian gayborhood. Trendy, affordable and funky coffeehouses, bars, secondhand shops and boutiques line Hawthorne Boulevard and Belmont Street.

The Pearl District was once an industrial district, which has sprung to life in recent years, its old warehouses converted into chic restaurants, boutiques, art galleries, and lounges. Stylish and luxurious apartments stand alongside the neighborhood's older structures, which include Powell's City of Books, the largest independent bookstore in the world, located on Northwest 10th Avenue and West Burnside Street. You will also find vintage clothing and used record stores, new up and coming restaurants, brewpubs, specialty retail stores, and galleries.

Old Town / Chinatown sits between the Willamette River and the Pearl. This historic district contains numerous galleries, gay bars, and clubs. It is also home to the Portland Saturday Market.

Portland's most visibly gay community is comprised of a triangular set of city blocks known by some as the Burnside Triangle. Bordered by Southwest Alder, S.W. 14th Ave., West Burnside Street, and Southwest Broadway Street, this area is known for its nightlife, boutiques and restaurants. The area has also been a meeting place for Portland's LGBT community since the turn of the 20th century.

Mississippi Avenue is one of several eastside neighborhoods where independent businesses and creative spirits thrive. This area is considered to be Portland's up-and-coming gayborhood and it provides visitors with a taste of the city's quirky character.

*(Financing...Continued from page 2)*

prayers for strength in the journey, hospitality in the face of rejection, peace amidst hurtful language, humbleness in our successes, and love of our neighbors in all that we do.

Have you received enough ideas? If not, we welcome your creativity. Let us know what we could be doing to move the UMC towards full inclusion. And let us know how you can help us do it.

A copy of the treasurer's year-end report is available upon a written request to the P.O. box or email address, [umaffirmation\\_at\\_yahoo.com](mailto:umaffirmation_at_yahoo.com).

## Affirmation will be at General Conference

By Walter Lockhart

In May 2016, the United Methodist Church will once again gather for worship and fellowship and to organize our common ministry as a denomination. General Conference has the opportunity to transform the United Methodist Church into a denomination that welcomes all people regardless of gender identity or preference of life partner, works toward justice for all the oppressed, and lives into the radical grace that God freely gives in Jesus Christ.

I want to be excited about our chances of success. I do believe in the power of the Holy Spirit to open hearts and mind of delegates and lead to many real changes in our beloved church.

As a realist, I am personally approaching General Conference with a different mindset. Our denomination is shrinking as part of an historic change in the role of church in the United States. Our numbers have shrunk and our influence in society is shrinking. We are challenged by distrust of different political and theological agendas that matches the distrust in the general society. Our church is worried about organization, budget, control and assets. We are often looking for crumbs instead of living in the abundance of God's grace. I am not hopeful that these existential issues will be solved. The lack of trust makes it hard for me to see how we will grow in justice and inclusion. The work is going to be hard and the journey will be up a steep and winding road.

I am a United Methodist. This is my church. So I must once again return to General Conference to insure that all voices will be at the table. How could General Conference have a conversation about LGBTQ inclusion without all of these

*(At GC...Continued on page 5)*



*(At GC...Continued from page 4)*

voices at the table showing the path of real change? How can the church find a postcolonial relationship with our African Churches without the voice of LGBTQ voices at the table insuring that our church stands against discriminatory laws that oppress or criminalize people? How can we discuss sexuality, birth control, marriage, or parenting without the full story of how God's gift of sexuality is expressed? I am going to Portland representing Affirmation so that we can work to insure all the voices are at the table.

The last dozen General Conferences have been painful, challenging, and discouraging for LGBTQ people. However, we keep returning to tell the story of God's love in all people and to insure that all voices are heard. I suggest we go to Portland with humility and grace. I do not know where the United Methodist Church will stray on its journey toward justice, grace, and holiness. If we stand up to power, insure all voices are heard, and listen for God's presence, then we can be certain that we are working to be a part of the historic changes that God's love is bringing to our world and church.

Come to Portland if you can. Join and give to the *Love Your Neighbor Coalition* if you can. Please pray for me to have humility and grace.

*(A Vision...Continued from page 3)*

Therefore WE CALL OUR CHURCH to reject attempts at merging religious beliefs with nationalism or subjugating one belief system or cultural group to another, but instead, with respect and integrity, to share with persons of other faiths the truth that has come to us through Jesus Christ, as we listen for the truths we can learn from others.

WE BELIEVE in a church that strives for economic justice.

Therefore WE CALL OUR CHURCH to advocate economic policies that reflect love of neighbor by ensuring such basic needs as food, clothing, shelter, quality education, health care, a clean environment and a living wage in a workplace open to collective bargaining and free from violence and coercion.

WE BELIEVE in a church that welcomes and seeks justice for the stranger.

Therefore WE CALL OUR CHURCH to stand against injustices of poverty, war, and violence which often create refugee and migrant communities and to advocate for just and compassionate immigration policies in those places where refugees and immigrants have sought to make their homes.

Because of these, OUR BELIEFS, WE CALL ON OURSELVES AND OUR CHURCH to advocate for faithful, systemic and intersectional solutions to our human struggles, so that we might fully welcome the stranger and thereby love God, others and self, as Jesus asks of us; living lives that are shaped according to the good news of Jesus Christ and as faithful disciples and stewards of all of our relationships with God and God's creation.

Now you can click, sign, and donate at <http://bit.ly/LYNCvision>. Your gift makes all the difference.

The Love Your Neighbor Coalition is made up of:

Affirmation: United Methodists for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Concerns

Black Methodists for Church Renewal (BMCR)

Love Prevails

MARCHA: Metodistas Asociados Representando la Causa Hispano-Americanos

Methodist Federation for Social Action (MFSA)

Methodists in New Directions (MIND)

National Federation of Asian American United Methodists (NFAAUM)

Native American International Caucus of United Methodists (NAIC)

Pacific Islanders Caucus of United Methodists (PINCUM)

Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN)

United Methodist Association of Ministers with Disabilities

Western Methodist Justice Movement (WMJM)

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### **We're on Facebook!**

Affirmation now has a Facebook page! We're posting articles, Called Out alerts, and various other things. You can find our page at [TinyURL.com/UMAffFB](http://TinyURL.com/UMAffFB).



## October Affirmation Council Meeting

The Affirmation National Council met in Nashville October 8 to 10, where we heard a positive financial report, received a report on our partnership with LGBTI people in Uganda, signed Christmas cards to Affirmation members, and explored new fund raising strategies.

Our venue was the house where one of our co-coordinators, Stephen Mallett, lived for many years, and where Robin Williams acted in one of his last films, *Boulevard*. Some of us stayed up late to watch the movie and pointed to the rooms and beds where we were staying. The Nashville newspaper noted that the film story coincidentally matched the story of Stephen and his wife—a mid-life coming out story.

Business included voting in new council members. Gary Shephard, a previous council member and co-convenor, accepted a nomination and joined the council. Johnny Gall, previously our MOSAIC liaison member, joined as a non-MOSAIC liaison member. We're looking for a new MOSAIC liaison. The council regretfully accepted the resignation of Laci Lee Adams.

With General Conference 2016 just months away, Walter Lockhart, Affirmation's representative to the *Love Your Neighbor Coalition*, shared that Affirmation provided the money to hold the hotel rooms, which will be across from the convention center. The LYNC statement has more than 1000 signers and 12 caucus groups are on board. Although a policy change is unlikely in 2016, our coalition is stronger than ever.

Jan Olson presented the budget for 2016 and let us know that she is at the end of her tenure. Council members

expressed deep appreciation to Jan and will identify a new treasurer. As the members signed Christmas cards, ideas for fundraising emerged. Because of Tim Tennant-Jayne's bequest (Tim was Affirmation Co-spokesperson and died in January 2014,) Affirmation has the basic resources to create a program that will inspire giving. In August 2015, the council approved start up funding for The Liberty Africa Youth Foundation as it launched both a beauty salon and a brick making business in Uganda run by LGBT people. We reviewed the progress of project, and are hopeful these projects will help LGBTQ people in Africa achieve financial independence and inspire gifts from Affirmation donors.



Back Row: Mary Lynn Ragan Clunn, Stephen Mallett, Gary Shephard. Front Row: Walter Lockhart, Jan Hensley-Olson, Lyn Ellis, Ann Craig

### Googling? Try GoodSearch Instead!

We here at Affirmation are really big on earning money in easy, unobtrusive ways. That's why we're so excited about the opportunities to fundraise using GoodSearch, the Google of charitable institutions. The next time you need to find something, you can just go to [goodsearch.com](http://goodsearch.com), select Affirmation as your charity and search away. We'll get a penny for every search term. It may not seem like much, but it's money for nothing, and every bit helps!



## Affirmation National Council

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A Woman in New York

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\* Note: substitute the symbol "@" for the letters "\_at\_" in the email addresses above.



*(Love...continued from page 1)*

are being careful, persecution still happens. We will be praying for the success of the hair salon and brick making businesses.

**When you give to Affirmation,** you give to cutting edge ministries like the support of 40 LGBTQ Ugandans who are praying for better times. Affirmation has been a force for justice ever since the "incompatibility" language was first passed, and gave birth to the Reconciling Ministries Network. We were the first to add the "T" and the first to have transgender leadership. Today, we are among the first to be engaged in Africa with LGBTQ people who are trying to survive persecution.

**Pray with us, give with us, and work with us as we expand our horizons. John Wesley said, "The World Is My Parish." We can do no less.**



# Affirmation

## Affirmation An Independent Voice for: United Methodists for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns

### Meet Your Affirmation Leadership

**Mary Lynn Ragan Clunn:** I'm an attorney currently living in Alexandria, VA. I have been active in the UMC for many years on the local, district, conference and denominational level with churches in NC, NJ, NY, VA and DC. I was asked to join the Affirmation Council in late 2013. I am an ally and happily married to Rev. Steve Clunn. We have three adult children (Drew, Ally, and Julia) and a new granddaughter named Clementine. I am a passionate humanitarian with commitments to social justice and human rights, children and youth issues, gender-neutral language and UNC basketball.

**Ann Craig:** After 22 years working at General Board of Global Ministries and United Methodist Women with one foot in the closet and one foot out, I became the first director of religion at GLAAD where I worked with 20 or more LGBTQ faith groups like Affirmation. What an ecumenical and interfaith experience! Today, I am a consultant to [The Fellowship Global](#) working to win the hearts and minds of faith leaders in East and West Africa and helping shine a light on the historic role played by Metropolitan Community Churches in marriage equality and so much more. It's good to be back with Affirmation on the Council.

**Lyn Ellis:** In retrospect, perhaps coming out to myself in my last year of seminary was bad timing, and most people will tell you, getting kicked out of seminary is a surefire way to derail plans to be ordained. I licked my wounds for a while, and slowly went back to church. A dear friend introduced me to a wonderful reconciling congregation (Broad Street United Methodist in Columbus) and my pastor, mentor, and friend introduced me to Affirmation. In the fall of 2008, I joined the council as co-coordinator. What a joy it has been to meet some really wonderful people who are working hard to change the church. My partner and I live in Columbus, OH, where I sell hardware. She is a nurse and I am a reverend by informal ordination. Over the past few years, we have been foster parents, parenting over 70 kids, many of them teenagers who were kicked out of their homes for being lesbians. We adopted two girls, one who is now 20 and pregnant. Our other adopted daughter is a delightful and challenging nine-year old. Our one biological daughter is 11. We are currently taking a break from fostering to focus on our forever family, but still keep in contact with as many of "our kids" as we can.

**Walter C. Lockhart IV:** I am a husband, father, ordained clergy, progressive organizer, skeptic scholar, privileged, cis-gender man who uses masculine pronouns, and who overeats. I am passionate, caring, and strategic. I have been organizing with Affirmation for years because my mother taught me that everyone gets to understand their own identity and it is none of my business. Affirmation is on the forefront of identifying our places of learning so that the UMC can hear all of God's people. Currently I serve two urban churches in Minneapolis that are working to find what church can be in our core cities. My passion is centered on running a wilderness camp in the summer for youth to have life changing experiences in the woods of Northern Minnesota. The best way for me to relax is with a massage on a warm beach.

In the next newsletter, we'll profile Johnny Gall, Stephen Mallett, Gary Shephard, and One Woman from the New England Jurisdiction.

### Affirmation: United Methodists for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns

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